

8.0 CIRCULATION (*italics represent changes to the current plan*)

This chapter of the Comprehensive Community Plan addresses all modes of transportation including the town roadway system, public transit programs, and existing and proposed pedestrian and bicycle routes within the town. It is essential to provide safe and efficient circulation while maintaining the town's small town and rural qualities and scenic values. Future transportation projects, initiatives and policies are also addressed.

8.1 Roadway System

The roadway system classifies a road or street according to the function it serves or is intended to serve. A roadway can serve two separate functions: provide for through traffic and travel mobility, the principal function of expressways and arterials; and provide access to adjacent land, the major function of local or residential streets and to some degree collector routes.

Tiverton uses a system of three highway classifications for rural and urban areas, *as follows:*

Arterial: A major street that serves as an avenue for the circulation of traffic onto, out of, or around a municipality and which carries high volumes of traffic.

Collector: A street whose principal function is to carry traffic between local streets and arterial streets, but that may also provide direct access to abutting properties.

Local: A street whose primary function is to provide access to abutting properties.

Figure 8-1 shows the existing functional classification of the roadways in Tiverton.

Conflicts and Accident Data

Conflicts in functional classification are becoming increasingly evident in Tiverton due to the growth of housing subdivisions, drive-through windows and other elements of suburban sprawl. A number of areas are especially problematical, including the following:

- * Main Road from Riverside Drive to Narragansett Avenue*
- * Main Road from Pocasset Hill Cemetery to Russell Drive*
- * Bliss Four Corners at the intersection of Stafford Road and Bulgarmarsh Road*
- * Canning Boulevard from the Fall River border to Stafford Road at Hurst Lane*

The Tiverton Police Department maintains accident records for roadways and streets in the town. *Those streets reporting ten or more accidents in 2004 are indicated in the table below.*

TABLE 8-1
Traffic Accidents by Roadway, 2004

<u>Roadway</u>	<u>Accidents</u>
Main Road	151
Route 24	50
Stafford Road	46
Bulgarmarsh Road	32
Fish Road	31
Crandall Road	22

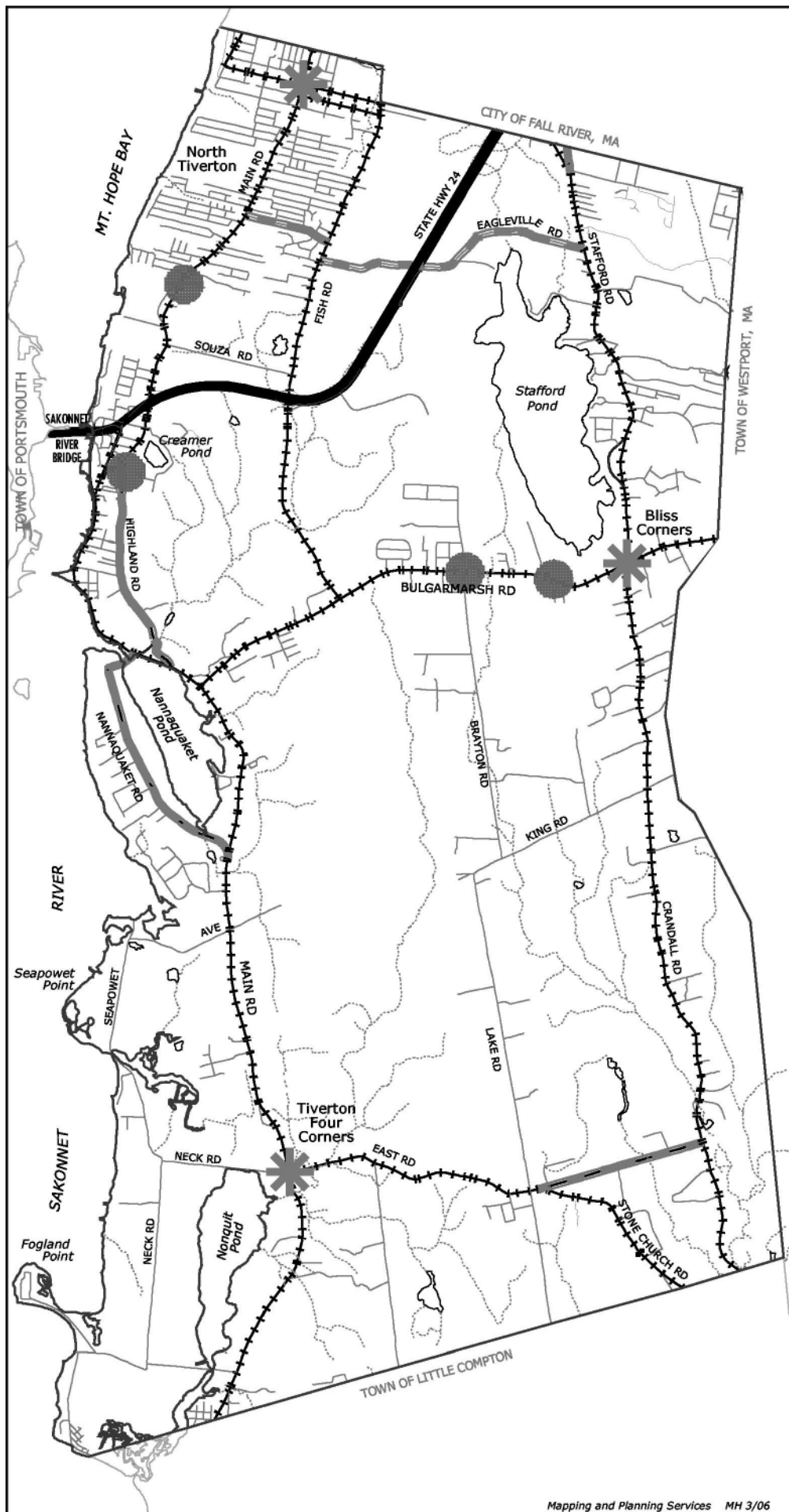
The Police Chief reports that the majority of these accidents were due to speeding and roadway alignment difficulties, although the relatively high number of accidents on Main Road resulted from the number of intersections, driveways and other obstacles along that route. *A breakdown of the locations of accidents along Main Road for the year 2004 is as follows:*

TABLE 8-2
Traffic Accidents along Main Road, 2004

<u>Main Road Section</u>	<u>Accidents</u>
State line to Judson Street	21
Judson Street to Warren Ave	26
Warren Ave to Route 24	33
Route 24 to Central Ave	13
Central Ave to Bridgeport	24
Bridgeport to Lafayette Road	19
Lafayette Road to Pond Bridge	15
Pond Bridge to Little Compton	<u>0</u>
TOTAL	151

Maintenance

Tiverton shares maintenance responsibilities for the roadways in town with the state Department of Transportation. The state lists 182 miles of roadway in Tiverton, of which 33 miles are state owned and maintained. The remainders are maintained by the Tiverton Department of Public Works which employs 10 people. *Snowplowing is also contracted separately on roadways in town.*



FHWA Functional Classification 2005-2105

- Urban Principal Arterial
- Urban Minor Arterial
- Urban Collector
- Urban Non Classified

Signalized Intersection

Caution Signal

Source: RIGIS/RIDOT Roads
(2005-2015 Functional
Classification based on
Federal Highway HPMS values).

DRAFT



0 1 Mile

The information depicted on this map is for general planning purposes only. It may not be adequate for legal boundary definition or regulatory interpretation.

TIVERTON COMPREHENSIVE
COMMUNITY PLAN

Figure 8-1
ROAD FUNCTIONAL
CLASSIFICATION
(2005-2015)



The Department of Public Works reports that the major maintenance problems involve paving conditions in poor soil areas that cause roadways to buckle. *Recent severe winters highlighted another maintenance issue. High ground water levels cause water to seep into basements in certain areas of town. Homeowners are forced to pump water out of their basements. The Department of Public Works is working with homeowners to tie pumped water directly into storm water drains to alleviate water and ice on street surfaces.*

Tiverton has also been historically plagued by the ambiguous legal status of many streets which have never been formally accepted as town streets, yet receive varying degrees of town services. In other cases, private streets have been petitioned for takeover by the town but have not been built or maintained to town standards. This is an on-going source of dispute for both the Planning Board and the Town Council.



Main Road is Tiverton's busiest street

8.2 Public Transit and Rail Service

The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) operates commuter buses in the morning and evening that link Little Compton and Tiverton with Newport and Providence, through Bristol, Warren, and Barrington. Tiverton ridership along this route is low.

The RI Department of Transportation operates a park and ride facility at the intersection of Route 24 and Fish Road that has a design capacity for 92 cars.

RIPTA also operates a low-cost “FlexService” minivan with both scheduled service and individual taxi service anywhere in the service area that includes Tiverton and parts of Portsmouth and Bristol. The FlexService also links to Fall River public transportation. Minibus taxi service by the Rhode Island Disabled and Elderly Program (RIDE) is also available to the disabled and elderly population of Tiverton for transport to medical facilities, senior centers and retail establishments. Both the FlexService and RIDE programs offer wheelchair accessible vans.

The Newport and Old Colony railway line originally ran from Fall River down to Newport on the west side of north Tiverton along Mount Hope Bay, over the Sakonnet River to Portsmouth, and along the west side of Aquidneck Island to downtown Newport. The line is currently inactive and the Sakonnet River swing bridge linking Tiverton and Portsmouth is scheduled to be removed. The right-of-way is owned by the RI Department of Transportation, although the Providence and Worcester Railroad Company has freight rights that can be exercised at any time subject to rail repairs. However, both commuter rail service and a bicycle path are feasible and desirable future uses for this corridor.

Long term plans by the Metropolitan Boston Transit Authority (MBTA) include the New Bedford - Fall River Commuter Rail Extension, referred to as the South Coast commuter rail line. This project, which is in the preliminary design and environmental permitting stages, will extend the existing Stoughton Line from Boston to New Bedford and Fall River and will include construction of new track, bridges, grade crossings and eight new commuter rail stations. It will provide 16 daily roundtrips (8 from each city) and serve a total of 4,280 new daily inbound riders. Construction is not expected to be complete until at least 2010, but the ability to commute to Boston from nearby Fall River will have an impact on the growth potential for Tiverton and job opportunities for its residents.



The Newport and Old Colony Railroad right-of-way has future transportation potential

8.3 Sakonnet River Bridge

The Sakonnet River Bridge carries nearly 40,000 cars per day on RI Route 24 between Portsmouth and Tiverton. The existing bridge is in deteriorating surface condition, is structurally deficient and does not meet shoulder width or seismic protection requirements. Five alternatives for rehabilitation or replacement were studied by RI Department of Transportation, and in April 2003 a final environmental report was approved which selected the option of a replacement bridge on the southerly most alignment as the one having the least environmental impacts. Construction of the new bridge is expected to begin in 2007 and take three years to complete. It will feature two lanes in each direction with a combined bike and pedestrian path on the north side separated from vehicular traffic by safety rails. It will not include bimodal capacity for rail transit.

8.4 Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation

There are sidewalks only along the short section of Main Road from Fall River to the Pocasset School, and in a few other limited areas, such as along Main Road in the Stone Bridge area. There are no designated bike routes or trails in the town. The RI Department of Transportation (RIDOT) has prepared a Statewide Bicycle System Plan with the goal of linking bicycle tolerant roadways and bike paths as part of an integrated network serving the entire state.

In 2002, the town received a grant from RIDOT for the planning and implementation of a pedestrian and bike route along a scenic section of Main Road from the Stone Bridge area north to Riverside Drive. Aspects of the project include streetscape enhancements and other physical improvements to reduce traffic speeds, improve parking and accommodate pedestrians, as well as opening up view corridors so that residents and visitors alike may enjoy the water views and safely and efficiently patronize small retail shops and restaurants.



The Stone Bridge area has possibilities for improved traffic flow, pedestrian safety and bicycle links

An earlier study (1997) funded by RIDOT focused on the feasibility of an on-road bike route through southern Tiverton. The so-named Sakonnet River Bikeway would connect the Town Hall with the waterfront at Stone Bridge and follow along scenic roadways including Nanaquaket Road, Seapowet Avenue and Puncateest Neck Road to the border with Little Compton. While this bikeway was not pursued further by the town, many of the roadways remain very suitable for bicycling for both recreation and travel purposes, and are delineated as such on the current version of the state bike map (“A Guide to Cycling in the Ocean State”). The possibility also remains that Tiverton could be part of a larger bicycle network that involves linking the Stone Bridge area with a bike route along the rail corridor described above, which could also eventually link to bikeways in both the East Bay area and Aquidneck Island.

85 Circulation Goal and Objectives

Goal

Provide for the safe and efficient management of automobile traffic while encouraging alternative forms of circulation that complement the community’s special character and quality of place.

Objectives

- *Implement design guidelines that assure safe and efficient access and egress to commercial establishments and housing subdivisions.*
- *Inventory town rights of way and platted, unimproved streets and roads, and determine their legal status.*
- *Encourage public transportation usage, including RIPTA commuter bus service.*
- *Encourage the provision of alternative forms of circulation, including bicycle, pedestrian and water transportation.*

8.6 Circulation Policies

Roadway System

To implement the functional classification, the town should limit driveways along arterials and collectors to the extent that they allow reasonable use of adjacent property. Shared driveways or the development of internal circulation systems should be encouraged. Subdivision and site plan reviews should reflect these policies. Where possible, regional or through traffic should be directed to arterials, not collectors. *Traffic signals are inconsistent with the functioning and character of community’s roadways and should be avoided wherever possible, consistent with safety considerations.*

In addition, Tiverton's safe and efficient transportation systems can be maintained and enhanced without sacrificing the community's attractive appearance. Roadways should be both functional and aesthetically pleasing to maintain quality of place. Many town roadways continue to reward motorists with scenic landscapes and water views, including numerous reminders of the town's maritime and agricultural history and culture. However, recent commercial and housing development adjacent to major transportation corridors threatens functionality and appearance. Examples of unsightly roadside development include drive-through windows, sprawling commercial parking lots with inadequate landscaping, oversized signage and excessive lighting. Unsightly sprawl also poses a safety hazard by attracting increased traffic volume that burdens existing roadways.

Policy 1: *Continue to review and update site plan review provisions for commercial development and residential subdivision regulations as they pertain to circulation and access. Review street design and construction standards, off-street parking requirements and other design standards.*

Drive-through windows contribute to tailpipe air pollution and can present a safety hazard to adjoining roadways. The Conservation Commission's Litter Abatement Committee also reports that the largest single source of roadside litter comes from the town's drive-through windows. These windows pose safety hazards because motorists queue-up on public roads at peak traffic periods. Moreover, drive-through windows detract from the community's rural and scenic quality.

Policy 2: *Limit the construction of additional drive-through windows.*

Title 45 Section 23.1 of the Rhode Island General Laws empowers communities to prepare and adopt an official map that identifies and shows the location of public streets and proposed streets. The law provides a procedure for the preparation of an official map. *Such an official street map can guide the town in allocating the services and resources of the Public Works Department related to road maintenance.*

Policy 3: *Conduct a comprehensive audit to determine legal status of streets in town, and maintain an updated "official street map" in Town Hall. This inventory should include platted, unimproved streets and roads.*

Commuter Transportation

Currently, RIPTA provides the only source of *commuter* transportation in the town. Despite low ridership, it is an essential service for those who use it. Greater publicity of routes, publication of timetables and promotion is essential if ridership is to be increased. Marketing and service planning is important, despite the low density of development, high levels of auto ownership and short work trips which make it difficult to serve this area with public transit.

A resident survey of usage would be useful to determine adjustments in schedules that would make this service more convenient. Place of work data from the 2000 Census would be particularly useful to evaluate this service.

Policy 4: **Encourage increased use of RIPTA commuter services by evaluating and adjusting schedules to serve residents, and promote the availability of the services through greater publicity.**

Alternative Forms of Circulation

The town should take steps to make itself amenable to alternative forms of circulation, in particular pedestrians and bicycles. Sidewalks should be provided, particularly within commercial areas in Tiverton Four Corners, north Tiverton and at Bliss Four Corners. New sidewalks provided should include a planted strip which separates it from the street. Lower speeds should be enforced on streets with sidewalks or bikeways. Neckdowns, or narrowed pavements at intersections such as Bliss Four Corners and Tiverton Four Corners would encourage, rather than intimidate pedestrians.

The bicycle is a viable alternative to the automobile for many short trips. A system of bicycle routes should be identified which link key areas in the community such as schools, town facilities, shopping areas and major subdivisions. Two types of bicycle routes should be considered.

Bikeways: *A roadway designated for bicycle use by either pavement markings defining a lane for bicycles or a vertical sign indicating a shared right-of-way.*

Bike Paths: *A separate right-of-way for the exclusive use of bicycles and non-motorized vehicles.*

Policy 5: **Develop a system of pedestrian and bike routes compatible with the safe use of the existing road system.**

The right-of-way of the Newport and Old Colony railroad is a special resource that should be protected for future use. *RIDOT has completed a study of the rail corridor and has decided to maintain the right-of-way while encouraging multiple uses in the future. Such uses include commuter rail, excursion trains, a bike path and pedestrian use. A recent examination of rail right-of-way use options on Aquidneck Island calls for further study of the feasibility of restored rail service to the island. This option is enhanced by the prospect of commuter rail service between Boston and Fall River. A pedestrian and bike trail can exist alongside of the rail line. The town, along with its neighbors on Aquidneck Island, should consider all options and include its recommendations in upcoming Transportation Improvement Programs.*

Policy 6: **Preserve the public right-of-way of the Newport and Old Colony Railway and evaluate the use of the line as part of a regional transportation plan, including pedestrian and bicycle access.**

Transportation Improvement Program

The statewide Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a biennial document developed by the Transportation Advisory Committee and adopted by the State Planning Council. It directs federal transportation dollars to individual projects and programs that are implemented chiefly through RIDOT and RIPTA. Local pedestrian, bicycle and roadway improvements are intended to be coordinated with this program.

Recent TIP projects scheduled for funding in the Town of Tiverton include, of course, the replacement of the Sakonnet River Bridge as well as two projects under the Transportation Enhancement Program, a special category of funding that focuses on non-traditional transportation projects that relate to community character and the natural environment. These projects include the improvements to Main Road in the Stone Bridge area, described above, as well as acquisition of additional open space in the Weetamoo Woods area.

Policy 7: Maintain and update local priorities for local pedestrian, bicycle and roadway improvements based on the adopted Transportation Improvement Program. These priorities should be submitted for consideration in the state's biennial Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).



Tiverton has many beautiful roadways suitable for bicycling